

The “Complementary Distribution” of Grammatical Complexity in English and Russian*

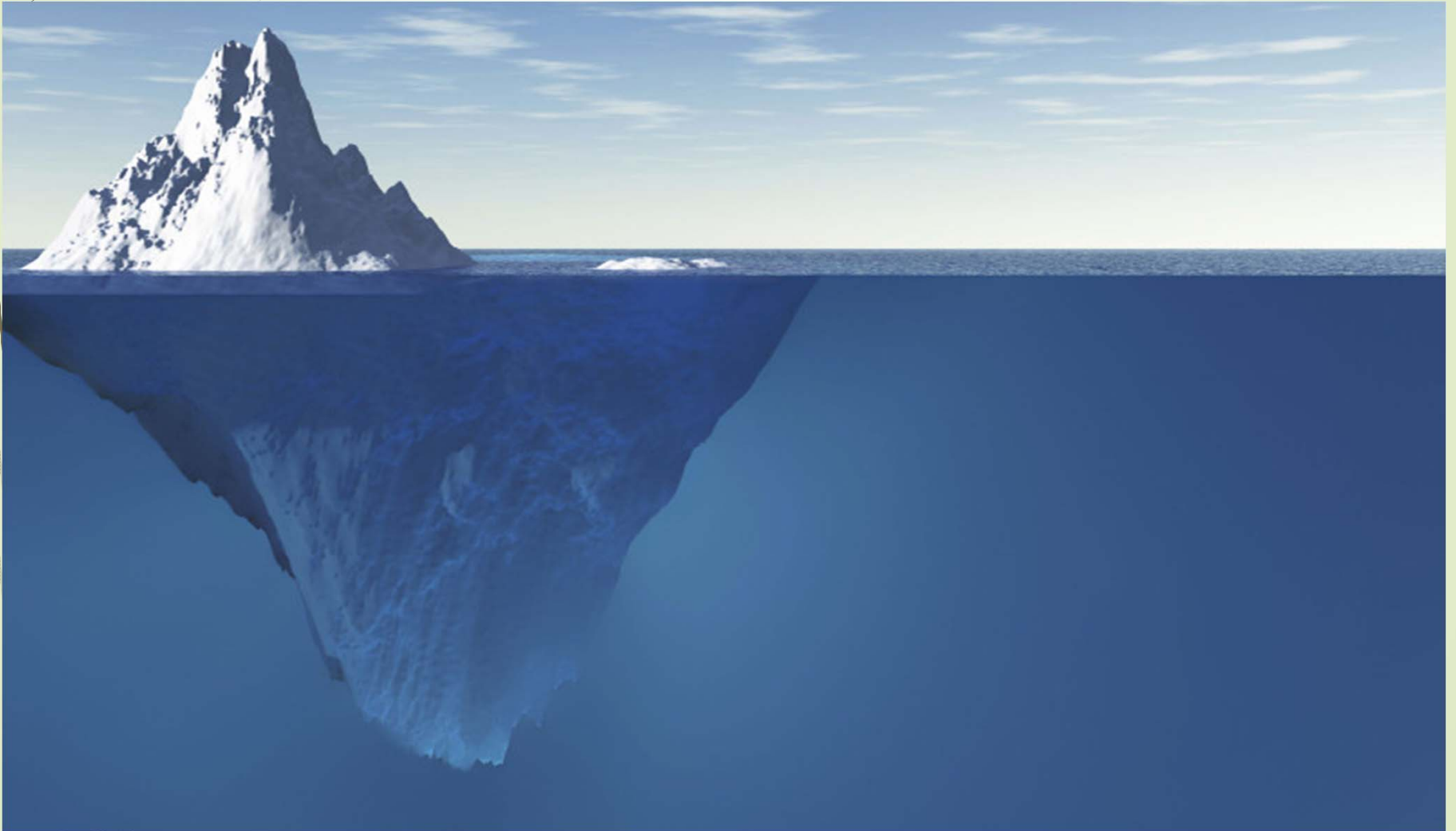
J. Daniel Humphries, Ph.D.
National Cryptologic School

*or, Why English-Speaking Students Find Russian So Difficult!

Morphological Complexity

Nominal System		Verbal System
English	- complexity	+ complexity
Russian	+ complexity	- complexity

Apparent vs. Latent Difficulty



Russian Case System

- 1. Function initially hard to grasp – English mainly uses word order and prepositional phrases to indicate syntactic relationship of words.**
- 2. Case generates a large number of surface forms for words.**

Argument Case Assignment

Subject	Verb	Direct Object
Я	изучаю	русский язык.
	занимаюсь	русским языком.
	учусь	русскому языку.
I	study	Russian.

Gender and Animacy

Subject	Verb	Direct Object	
		Inanimate	Animate
Я	вижу	стол-Ø	брат-а
		хорош-ую книг-у	хорош-его дяд-ю

Russian Past Tense

Number	Gender	Imperfective	Perfective
Singular	Masculine	Он делал стол. He made/was making a table.	Он сделал стол. He made a table.
	Feminine	Она делала стол. She made/was making a table.	Она сделала стол. She made a table.
	Neuter	Оно делало стол. It made/was making a table.	Оно сделало стол. It made a table.
Plural	Ø	Они делали стол. They made/were making a table.	Они сделали стол. They made a table.

Russian Present Tense

Number	Person	
Singular	1 st	Я делаю стол. I make/am making a table.
	2 nd	Ты делаешь стол. You make/are making a table.
	3 rd	Он делает стол. He makes/is making a table.
Plural	1 st	Мы делаем стол. We make/are making a table.
	2 nd	Вы делаете стол. You (all) make/are making a table.
	3 rd	Они делают стол. They make/are making a table.

Russian Future Tense

Number	Person	Perfective	Imperfective
Singular	1 st	Я сделаю стол. I will make a table.	Я буду делать стол. I will make a table.
	2 nd	Ты сделаешь стол. You will make a table.	Ты будешь делать стол. You will make a table.
	3 rd	Он сделает стол. He will make a table.	Он будет делать стол. He will make a table.
Plural	1 st	Мы сделаем стол. We will make a table.	Мы будем делать стол. We will make a table.
	2 nd	Вы сделаете стол. You (all) will make a table.	Вы будете делать стол. You (all) will make a table.
	3 rd	Они сделают стол. They will make a table.	Они будут делать стол. They will make a table.

Russian Conditional/Subjunctive

Number	Gender	Imperfective	Perfective
Singular	Masculine	Он бы делал стол. He would be making a table.	Он бы сделал стол. He would make a table.
	Feminine	Она бы делала стол. She would be making a table.	Она бы сделала стол. She would make a table.
	Neuter	Оно бы делало стол. It would be making a table.	Оно бы сделало стол. It would make a table.
Plural	∅	Они бы делали стол. They would be making a table.	Они бы сделали стол. They would make a table.

Russian Imperatives

Person	Number	Imperfective	Perfective
2 nd	Singular	Делай стол! Make a table!	Сделай стол! Make a table!
	Plural	Делайте стол! Make a table!	Сделайте стол! Make a table!

Russian Periphrastic Imperatives

Person	Number	Imperfective	Perfective
1 st	Singular	∅	Давай я это сделаю! Let me do that!
	Plural	Давайте отдыхать! Let's rest!	(Давайте) отдохнем!/Пойдемте! Let's rest/Let's go!
3 rd	Singular	Пусть она читает! Let her read!	Пусть она прочитает письмо! Let her read the letter!
	Plural	Пусть они читают! Let them read!	Пусть они прочитают письмо! Let them read the letter!

Past Perfect Meaning



Past Perfect Form

I understood that part of the movie because I **had read** the book.

Я понял эту часть фильма потому, что я **прочитал** книгу.

Past Tense Form

Present Perfect Meaning



Present Perfect Form

I **have lived** here my whole life.

I **have seen** that movie three times.

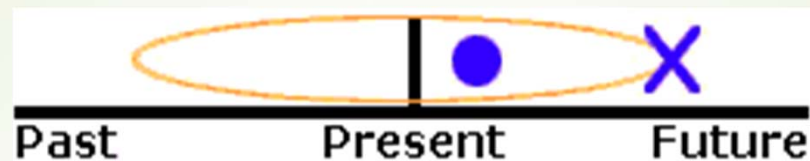
Я **живу** здесь всю жизнь.

Я (по)смотре**л** этот фильм
три раза (уже).

Present Tense Form

Past Tense Form

Future Perfect Meaning



Future Perfect Form

I will have seen that movie before the director arrives.

Я посмотрю этот фильм до того, как придет режиссёр.

Future Tense Form

Conditional Forms

English		Russian
Hypothetical Fulfillable	I would help you if you asked me.	Я бы вам помог, если бы вы меня попросили.
Hypothetical Unfulfillable	I would have helped you if you had asked me.	

English

Macedonian

Verb

Complexity

Noun

Russian

Syntactic Relations

English	Macedonian	Russian
a friend <u>of</u> John	еден пријател <u>на</u> Jovan	друг Ивана
<u>The</u> student lives in <u>the</u> house.	Студентот <u>живее</u> во куќата <u>.</u>	Студент живет в доме.
<u>A</u> student lives in <u>the</u> house.	<u>Еден</u> Студент живее во куќата <u>.</u>	
<u>The</u> student lives in <u>a</u> house.	Студентот <u>живее</u> во куќа(- <u>Ø</u>).	

Past Tense Forms

	English	Macedonian	Russian
Past Continuous	Ana was reading the book.	Ана ја читаше книгата.	Анна читала книгу.
Simple Past	Ana already read the book.	Ана веќе ја прочита книгата.	Ана уже прочитала книгу.
Present Perfect	Ana has already read the book.	Ана веќе ја има прочитано книгата.	
Past Perfect	Ana had already read the book.	Ана веќе ја имаше прочитано книгата.	

Future Tense Forms

Number	Person	Imperfective	Perfective
Singular	1 st	Јас ќе читам книги. I will read books.	Јас ќе ја прочитам книгата. I will read the book.
	2 nd	Ти ќе читаш книги. You will read books.	Ти ќе ја прочиташ книгата. You will read the book.
	3 rd	Тој ќе чита книги. He will read books.	Тој ќе ја прочита книгата. He will read the book.
Plural	1 st	Ние ќе читаме книги. We will read books.	Ние ќе ја прочитаме книгата. We will read the book.
	2 nd	Вие ќе читате книги. You (all) will read books.	Вие ќе ја прочитате книгата. You (all) will read the book.
	3 rd	Тие ќе читаат книги. They will read books.	Тие ќе ја прочитаат книгата. They will read the book.

Conditional Forms

English		Macedonian	Russian
Real Conditional	If you study , you will finish school.	Ако учиш , ќе го свршиш училиштето.	Если ты учишься , (то) окончишь школу.
Hypothetical Conditional: Fulfillable	If you would study , you would finish school.	Ако би учел , би го свршил училиштето.	Если бы ты учился , (то) окончил бы школу.
Hypothetical Conditional: Unfulfillable	If you had studied , you would have finished school.	Да учеше , ќе го свршеше училиштето.	

Means of Expression

English		Macedonian	Russian
\pm Success	Every autumn he takes an exam.	Секој есен тој полаѓа испит.	Каждую осень он сдаёт экзамен.
+ Success	Every autumn he passes an exam.	Секој есен тој положува испит.	Каждую осень он успешно сдаёт экзамен.
Means:	Lexical	Aspectual	Adverbial

Annulled Events

Почему ты вставал?

The use of a perfective verb here would indicate that the result has been achieved and remains in force.

Since the result has been annulled, the imperfective is used. This type of imperfective shows a definite two-way motion (Davis, Oprendik 1973: 54).

Annulled Events

English: Yesterday they **brought** over their child to show us.

Russian: Они **приносили** вчера показать нам ребенка.

Bulgarian: Вчера **доведоха** детето си да ни го покажат.

Non-Goal Oriented Perfectives

В библиотеке я почитал, поговорил с другом, а потом ушел.

The first two verbs are atelic (non-goal oriented) verbs that are perfective for the purpose of sequencing, i.e., one atelic activity preceded the other.

Non-Goal Oriented Perfectives

English: Ana said, “it looks like it’s going to rain.” Ivan **was silent** for a moment and then said, “you can take my umbrella.”

Russian: Анна сказала: «Похоже, будет дождь.» Иван **помолчал** с минуту, а затем сказал: «Можешь взять мой зонт.»

Macedonian: Ана рече "Изгледа ќе врне дожд." Иван кратко **молчеше** па рече "можеш да земеш мојот чадор."